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WORLD

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THE BATTALION

Wednesday, February 16, 2000

Six nations continue talks

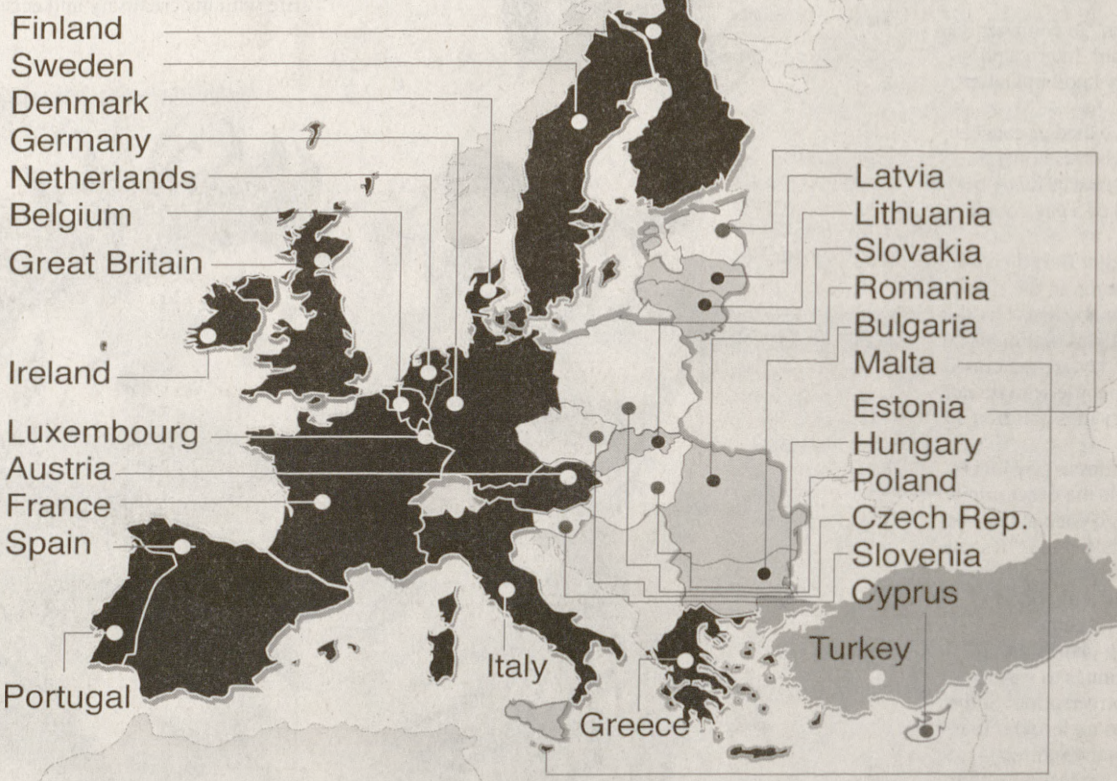
European Union expansion

Six European countries began talks on Tuesday for membership in the European Union.

- Nations starting negotiations for membership Tuesday
- Nations currently in negotiations
- Candidate nation waiting to start negotiations



Current member states



Source: Compiled from AP wire reports

Hijackers belong to family

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — While most passengers on the hijacked Afghan plane covered their faces with their hands, dozens of others laughed, ate their favorite food and drank from their favorite beverages.

They were the relatives of the hijackers, according to some of the freed hostages who returned to Afghanistan. Seventy-three passengers returned home; 74 others stayed in Britain seeking asylum or considering it.

Mohammed Shamsullah said the hijackers' goal was to seek asylum for themselves and their families. He said more than 30 of the people on the plane were relatives of hijackers. Some passengers said many as 40 were related.

The Ariana Airlines Boeing 747 was hijacked Feb. 6, shortly before arrival at the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif after a flight from Kabul. Nine men jumped out of the plane brandishing guns and knives.

The hijacking ended Feb. 11 in Britain after a standoff with British police at an airport outside London. The hijackers — 13 men — had been charged in a British court with beating one man with a stick and warning others to keep their hands between their knees, the freed hostages said.

The hijackers appeared to be nervous after the aircraft landed in Britain. "We didn't know what was happening because we never knew anything about hijacking. I thought maybe it was something political or there was a problem with the plane," Shamsullah said.

His wife, Shahbibi, was making her first flight. She said she was terrified: "I just kept crying and praying from the Koran."

The first stop was in Uzbekistan. Shamsullah said the hijackers were nervous, refusing to let small children leave their seats. Then the craft made an emergency stop in Kazakhstan.

"The second time when we landed everyone was very afraid because there was something wrong with the plane," he said. "When it landed everyone said 'God is great.'"

After Kazakhstan, the plane stopped in Moscow and finally London, where the passengers were given food and drink.

The hijackers gave preferred treatment to their families, giving them food and water first and handing out Pepsi to their children, Shamsullah said.

"They gave all the Pepsi to the children and we got what was left," he said. "In our country Pepsi is sweet, because it costs too much money."

Another passenger, who identified himself only as Rokhai, said there were 35 to 40 family members traveling with the hijackers. They, throughout the aircraft, he said.

"They divided their property among us. Everyone was afraid of their women and children laughing, they threw off their burkas and showed their faces. I thought they are very bad," Shamsullah said.

Afghanistan is strictly Islamic and men and women who are related do not interact.

Shamsullah said the hijackers talked freely with several women and children "and the women were very relaxed and not worried at all." There were reports that 36 members of the same family were aboard the plane, including a woman who was to be married in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Shamsullah denied that there was a bride aboard. Rokhai agreed.

Only one of the 13 names given to the British court was found on a passenger list at the Ariana Airlines office in Kabul.

An official there said the hijackers may have been given false names.

Power cut to goldfish blenders

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — Ten goldfish were swimming safely in their blender aquariums Tuesday after power to the controversial art exhibit was disconnected, Danish police said.

The display at the Trapholt Art Museum in western Denmark had let visitors decide whether to turn on 10 blenders, each containing a live goldfish and water.

Police ordered the power cut after two fish were killed at Friday's opening and animal rights activists filed a complaint. Authorities launched an investigation after five more fish were killed when the power was apparently left on over the weekend. The museum replaced the fish.

Deputy chief constable Birgit Nielsen said Tuesday that the blenders were disconnected from a power source Monday afternoon and it seemed the museum was following police orders. Museum director Peter Meyer still faced an undetermined fine for failing to do so immediately, she said.

Meyer welcomed the publicity Monday as the case made

national headlines, saying the exhibit didn't encourage people to blend the fish but addressed ethical questions about death. He was not at the museum Tuesday and could not be reached for comment.

The museum in Kolding, 125 miles west of Copenhagen, is one of many smaller art exhibitors in the Nordic country. It usually draws about 80,000 people each year, but had 1,000 curious visitors over the weekend — a very high off-season number, Meyer said.

Authorities also will investigate whether Meyer can be held responsible for breaking animal protection laws, in which case he and artist Marco Evaristti would face other fines, Nielsen said. Police also could charge the visitors who turned on the blenders if their identities could be established, she said.

The display by Evaristti, a Danish artist, includes the blenders on a table, a nude picture of the artist with blackened eyes and a bazooka missile surrounded by tubes of lipstick.

RA Appreciation Day

February 16, 2000

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